

17. Juxtaposing SouthPark and Salman Rushdie

17. I used to study counterterrorism, because it is virtually just the science of terrorism. Counterterrorism experts write about the history of terrorism, what led to its rise, what caused it setbacks, what works, what does not work, what worries them, and so on. Sometimes, they outright invent concepts and ideas. They sit at home and think about some way for terrorists to devastate the West, then they get on their blogs and write, "Warning! Terrorists could exploit such and such to deadly effect."

The whole world is spending billions of dollars researching what makes an effective terrorism movement. Rather than spending the next fifty years trying to establish Harvards, Yales, Pentagons, Councils on Foreign Relations, CIAs, FBIs and Congressional Committees dedicated to doing all of this for me, I decided to use what was already there and apply my own analysis to derive the most effective methods and strategies.

Two of my main goals were to make America's Muslim population more reflective of Europe's, and then to make all of the counterterrorism experts freak out and say we were becoming like Europe, because that seemed to be their doomsday scenario.

I figured that if I could demoralize them, I could make them think less rationally and provoke worse policy decisions. A lot of my posts were aimed at counterterrorism experts, because I was studying how they reacted. I was starting to figure out how to make them say what I wanted them to say.

I used to always pay attention to what counterterrorism experts would say about the rise of jihad in Europe, but very little of what I read made much sense.

They usually blamed a lack of integration and poverty in Europe's Muslim communities for their affinity for jihad. However, this was contrary to my own experience as well as demographic information on Al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda members tend to be wealthier, better-educated and more exposed to the West. Thus, I was looking for another explanation.

I found it when I saw a documentary tying Europe's experience to the Salman Rushdie affair. For one, the timing of that event reflected an appropriate date for a catalyst. It also coincided with the rise of Salafism in the West and a number of important theaters for jihad opened up.

shortly after that date

Also, the way Europe's Muslims reacted was bound to cause hatred among European nationalists. If you are some white European who spent his whole life among other white Europeans from the same area, and suddenly hundreds of dark-skinned people are marching down your street yelling and burning things, that is going to cause resentment. Hatred, as opposed to a lack of integration, is a powerful factor in motivating a population to oppose another.

Look at the African-American community in the United States. They are barely any better off or more integrated than they were fifty years ago. The faces of the black community in America are the same faces that were there one hundred years ago. It is still a bunch of morons swinging around a bunch of chains, while doing some stupid dance, and singing an idiotic song so ~~some~~ some white kids in the suburbs will give them some money. If you ask a white kid in America to name a black person, he is going to say Lil' Wayne, Kanye West or LeBron James. He is not going to say Barack Obama. Moreover, if that same white kid sees Lil' Wayne walking in the street, he is going to keep singing along to his dumb song about lollipops while he locks his door to

Keep ~~the~~ Lil' Wayne from robbing him.

You work in Washington, D.C. Where do the black people live? They live in South-East. Where do the white people live? They live in North-West. They do not even border one another.

If this is their condition, where are the Black Panthers? Where are the Malcolm X's? Where are the Huey Newton's? There are none, not one.

If you are a typical black American, you still ~~go to a school with no white people in it~~ go to a school with no white people in it; you come home to the same tiny apartment; your electricity still does not come on; your father is still in prison; and you are still choosing between cleaning some floor somewhere for the next forty years or selling drugs. However, the white guy at the grocery store ~~was~~ smiled at you instead of calling you the "N" word. Fifty years ago, you went home and you were thinking about killing the white guy in the grocery store. Today, you just wonder what happened to Obama.

The Salman Rushdie affair would have caused plenty of racist and nationalist backlash which would have brought about that feeling among Europe's Muslims.

Finally, the issue of insulting the Prophet.

(peace and blessings be upon him) is the most sensitive issue to any Muslim. If you go ~~up~~ up to the least pious Muslim you can find, one who calls himself "Moe" instead of Muhammad, sells drugs and has five girlfriends, and you degrade the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), he is probably going to try to beat you. The guy who killed the Pakistani politician for trying to relax a law on this issue was from a Sufi sect which is the main opposition to the Pakistani Taliban.

Every Muslim can relate to such an issue. Thousands of Muslims took to the streets in a highly emotional defense of their religion. When they went home and picked up their cigarettes and wine, they probably put ~~it~~ them back down for the first time. They probably pulled the Quran out of whatever cabinet they had sealed it away in. The rows for prayer in the mosques probably grew a bit. It is the kind of thing which can spark a significant increase in piety. It also causes one to feel ready to use violence for their religion. That would be essential for the rise of jihad in Europe.

South Park was a popular television show watched by millions of people. Our website was monitored by the media and we were known for our views and our influence. When

they aired an episode mocking the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), it presented a similar scenario to the Salman Rushdie affair. I made the most media enticing post I thought I could without being arrested and decided to test my theory.

By Allah's grace, everything worked phenomenally and we achieved most of these goals. Had I not disappeared in the middle of the affair and quit the website, it probably could have become a similarly defining moment in America's history. My main goal was really defending the honor of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and that was achieved when South Park censored their next episode. The backlash from "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" involved an audience which was less than 2% of South Park's audience in America alone.

When I attended the sermon that Friday, the imam was defending our website to one thousand people. Not one of them raised an objection. I would assume I did not happen to attend the only mosque in the country defending me that Friday. That would be a huge coincidence given that the imam had no idea who I was.

Our website was suddenly receiving so much traffic it stopped working. We became

the 68th most searched term on Google and one of the top ~~100~~ ^{one hundred} websites in America. CNN forgot about the rest of the world for a week.

When "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" was started on Facebook, thousands of Muslims protested around the world. Another Jihadi group started a counter-page which drew around 200,000 supporters. Foreign governments even got involved.

These are audiences Jihadi sites in Arabic, forget about English, had never seen before. ~~the~~ We were reaching hundreds the times ~~the~~ ^{the} people we were before.

Also, 2010 saw one of the most bitter years between America's Muslims and non-Muslims. Three of the year's top media stories had to do with the South Park controversy, so that almost certainly played a role. Anderson Cooper was sounding a bit like ~~the~~ Bill ~~O'Reilly~~ O'Reilly in his coverage (in fact, he was more anti-Islamic on this particular story). Muslims finally got to see what ^{many} Americans thought about them.

Some of my works which were related to this subject, but which I did not attach my name to nor do much marketing for, received abnormally large audiences even after some

of the hype died down, which is indicative of a longer-term impact.

That being said, it was not as seminal an event as the Salman Rushdie affair. Mostly, this is because I left Revolution Muslim in the middle of the controversy, even before the "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" events. We did not get to ~~that~~ do some of the things we planned.

One of our main ideas was to organize a protest. I think we had the potential to get fifty to one hundred people ^{more if we broadened the message} to protest in New York or DC, and that would have made it like the Salman Rushdie affair.

Muslims in America are scattered ^{as compared to Europe} all over the place. Also, it takes much more guts to hold an Islamically-oriented protest post-9/11 than it did ~~that~~ during the controversy of Rushdie's book. Fifty Jihadis standing in Times Square would be ^{breaking news} on NHK, BBC and Al-Jazeera, not to mention CNN, Fox and MSNBC. It would be a new sight for Americans, including American Jihadis.

It might not have the same variety of impact as the Rushdie incident, but it would have had just as significant of one. It would have broken the stigmas, paranoias and barriers which were plaguing the Jihadis in America. ~~that~~ The numbers involved in Europe's

protests might not come about, but the environment you see in the United Kingdom would have arrived.

That type of environment, where one feels free to express their views in public and even flaunt them, serves not only to increase one's ranks, but it also increases the percentage of Jihadis who will act on their beliefs and it dramatically impairs law enforcement's ability to detect plans.

For all I know, it could be like that now as a result of the Arab Spring. Some of the website data I have heard about ^{from} some Jihadi ~~sites~~ ^{sites} is bewildering. I was extraordinarily excited when I was on track to reaching 100,000 views per month on my Youtube page. Those were not even unique people. It was probably more like 5,000 unique people. That was the top Jihadi page in the world. Now, I am hearing figures which would imply a single post, statement, or video could easily get a million views in a day, all from unique people. I do not know if that has happened, but the potential is there.

18. Conflicts at Revolution Muslim

18. My era at Revolution Muslim represented a period of great cohesion. However, the site's initial crew was not all on the same page.

Some of the early figures who made the site what it was, such as Yusuf al-Khattab (Joseph Cohen) and Abdullah Jones were not, from an Islamic perspective Jihadis. Yusuf was Ikhwani (the belief associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, etc.) and Abdullah was an extreme Ash'ari. Ash'aris can easily believe the same things about Jihad as normal (i.e. Salafi) Jihadis, but their extreme end (and by "extreme," I am not referring to anything remotely related to Jihad; it is more of a spiritual issue) considers everyone but themselves to be disbelievers, and that includes virtually all Jihadis and the scholars they respect.

Also, their approach was more centered around politics than Islam, so they had a lot of posts ^{from} ~~about~~ Noam Chomsky, Malcolm X and other such figures.

Yusuf had been kicked off the site when I joined, but Abdullah was still there. When he started using the site to promote Ash'ari ideas, I brought it up and he was kicked off the site.

I cannot really speak on Al X and others who very rarely posted. While I was on the site, it was largely just me and Yunus (Jesse Morton) who handled things.

These issues were really just a product of the changing nature of the Jihadi movement in America. In 2007, when the site was founded, there was not a good pool of candidates to start something like that. By the time I joined in 2010, the American Jihadi movement had come into line with the global movement.

Actually, when I joined the site, the most important Jihadi sites representing the mainstream had freed themselves from Revolution Muslim, because of ~~Yusuf al-Khattab's~~ Yusuf al-Khattab's postings. The first thing I did was ~~to~~ repaired the site's reputation with mainstream Jihadis. After that, we sort of took a new direction.

Yusuf and I never really had a conflict, nor do I recall any from the other members who were coming along. I went about recruiting a bunch of British authors whose views I had followed. They were from the Al-Muhajirun movement, and we all seemed to be on the same page.

Tactically, we basically agreed that the ~~other~~ street-preaching phase was ^{mostly} over and that we were going to try to turn the site into a think-tank type of organization.

There were also plans for a charity, which

actually got started, and even broadcasting a television program in New York. Yes, we really were considering doing that and it was feasible.

All-in-all, the site ran smoothly. The conflicts which did occur seemed to have helped the site as opposed to harm it, because it allowed us to broaden ~~our~~ the issues we covered.

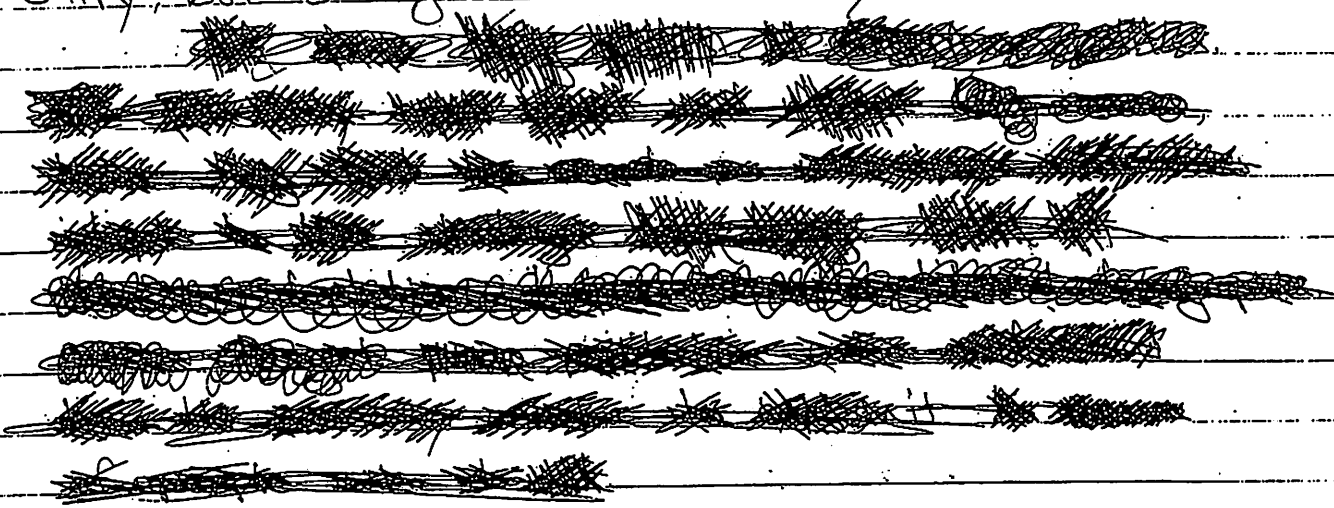
I know that disputes and arguments are fascinating to counterterrorism experts, but to me they are just part of the natural progression of the movement. Everytime you have a conflict ideas go to war and the stronger one eventually prevails, by Allah's grace. Whatever we lose in the short term is recovered as a result of an improved approach.

Al-Qaeda, for example, has had numerous shake-ups since its inception. ~~Some~~ Some of its absolute most important members, including some of Osama Bin Laden's closest friends, abandoned it in the 1990s over its approach to jihad. Some of these people even went on to lead their own movements. However, Al-Qaeda's brand prevailed.

Those were less "extreme," - as the West would call them - movements. Now, the opposite situation has surfaced, so another period of debate and experimentation has begun.

These things cause temporary difficulties, but not one single time has it been fatal.

The movement adapts and ~~then~~ either one idea is defeated and unity is built on grounds of homogeneity, or no idea prevails and the two sides agree to disagree which results in greater unity, but on grounds of diversity.



25. Molly Norris

25. I really never made an issue of Molly Norris herself, because she does not appear to have intended to bring about what her cartoon suggested nor what it resulted in. I read something suggesting I conspired to have her killed, but I was not even in contact with my alleged co-conspirator at the time. Wherever that originated, it is completely false.

While we have an issue with drawing all animate objects in Islam, that is not our issue with Everybody Draw Mohammed Day (peace and blessings be upon him). Rather, our issue is when somebody mocks or degrades the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

Norris certainly did something with an element of mockery and it led to a disgusting event, but there are factors to suggest she did not desire this and that she was not intending any form of degradation. I am not capable of passing Islamic judgments on such situations. If she were to present her case to a reputable Jihadi scholar, it is possible he would say she does not warrant being killed and that could help her come out of hiding. The alternative is possible as well.

Now, as for the ones who ran with the idea suggested in her cartoon they were an issue I pursued (albeit not as the government

alleged). Basically, Norris fell victim to a collective of anti-Islamic bloggers representing an ideology reminiscent of an unsophisticated Ku Klux Klan.

For them, let's just say I strongly encourage the Obama administration to extradite them to Syria to face justice.